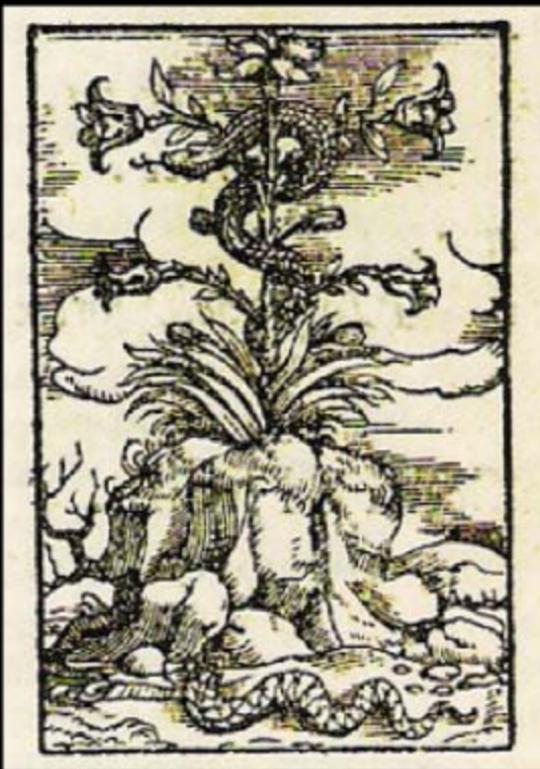




*Machiavelli's*  
*La Mandragola*



MANDRAGOLA  
**COMEDIA**  
FACETISSIMA  
DI M. NICOLO'  
MACHIAVELLI  
*Florentino.*

Nuouamente corretta, &  
Ristampata.



IN FIORENZA  
• M D L VI. •



# *The Mandragola*



[cf. a "Satyr Play"]

## Note on Names of Characters

**CALLIMACO GUADAGNI:** The first name is formed from the Greek words *kalos* (noble, handsome) and *machē* (battle). *Guadagni* is an Italian word for “gains,” “earnings,” “profits,” “advantages.”

**MESSER NICIA CALFUCCI:** The first name is derived from the Greek word *nikē* (victory). Machiavelli discusses the famous Athenian general with a similar name (Nicias) in *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius* (I 53 and III 16).

**LIGURIO:** Perhaps derived from the Latin word *ligurire* (to gloat over), or *ligare* (to tie up or bind).

**SOSTRATA:** A name used for older women in plays of Terence. See *The Mother-in-Law*, *The Self-Tormenter*, *The Brothers*.

**FRATE TIMOTEO:** This name is formed from the Greek word *time* (honor) and *theos* (God). It became a Christian name. The New Testament contains two Epistles from the Apostle Paul to someone named Timothy.

**LUCREZIA:** Machiavelli discusses the famous Roman woman of this name in the *Discourses* (III 2, 5, and 26).

# *Mandragola*

## CHARACTERS<sup>4</sup>

CALLIMACO	SIRO
MESSER NICIA	LIGURIO
SOSTRATA	FRATE TIMOTEO
A WOMAN	LUCREZIA

*Song<sup>5</sup> (to be spoken before the comedy, sung by nymphs and shepherds together)*

Because life is brief  
and many are the pains  
which, living and struggling, everyone sustains,  
  
let us follow our desires,  
passing and consuming the years,  
because whoever deprives himself of pleasure,  
to live with anguish and with worries,  
doesn't know the tricks  
of the world, or by what ills  
and by what strange happenings<sup>6</sup>  
all mortals are almost overwhelmed.

<sup>4</sup>See Note on Names of Characters.

<sup>5</sup>Machiavelli wrote this song and those between the acts in 1526 at the request of Francesco Guicciardini, papal governor of Romagna, for a production of the play at a carnival in Faenza or Modena. Guicciardini's recall to Rome prevented this production. The Songs were first printed with the text of the play in the Cambiagi edition of the complete works (Florence, 1782-83). The rhyme scheme of the stanzas following the first three lines is: ababbcdc.

<sup>6</sup>happenings: *casi*. *Caso* is elsewhere translated "case," as in the first stanza of the Prologue. See the "strange case" in Act Three, Scene Four.

To flee from this weariness,  
we have chosen the solitary life,  
and always, in festivity and in joy,  
young men with charm and glad nymphs we remain.  
Now we have come here  
with our harmony,  
only to honor this  
glad festival – and sweet company.

Besides, we have been brought here  
by the name of him<sup>7</sup> who governs you,  
in whom can be seen all  
the goods gathered in the eternal countenance.  
For such heavenly grace,  
for so happy a state,  
you can be glad,  
rejoice, and give thanks – to the one<sup>8</sup> who gave him to you.

<sup>7</sup>the name of him: stage translation: "Francesco Guicciardini."

<sup>8</sup>Pope Clement VII. Stage translation: "to Pope Clement."

## Prologue<sup>9</sup>

God save you, kind audience,  
Since it appears that this kindness depends  
on our being agreeable to you.  
If you continue not to make noises,  
we want you to come to understand  
a new case born in this city.  
You see the scene  
which now is shown to you:  
this is your Florence;  
another time it will be Rome or Pisa:  
a thing to break your jaws with laughter.

This doorway here on my right,  
is to the house of a *dottore*  
who learned in Buethius<sup>10</sup> a great deal of law.  
That street that's fitted into that corner there,  
is the Street of Love,  
where one who falls never rises again.  
Next you'll be able to recognize,  
from his *frate's* dress,  
what sort of prior or abbot  
lives in the church which is situated on the opposite side --  
if you don't leave here too soon.

<sup>9</sup>In a letter (from Faenza, December 26, 1525), Guicciardini suggested to Machiavelli that he write another Prologue, which would "suit the slight genius of the audience, and in which they would be depicted more than you." The rhyme scheme of the stanzas is: abcabcdee.

<sup>10</sup>Machiavelli misspells Boethius. The changed first letters spell *bue*, the Italian word for "ox."

A young man, Callimaco Guadagni,  
 just come from Paris,  
 lives there at that door on the left.  
 This man, among all other good companions,  
 shows the signs and traces  
 of carrying off the honor and prize for courtesy.  
 A young woman, a shrewd one,  
 was much loved by him,  
 and by him was tricked,  
 as you will hear. And I would wish  
 that you might be tricked<sup>11</sup> as she was.

The fable is called *Mandragola*.  
 I imagine that you'll see the reason  
 when it is performed.  
 The one who composed it is not of great fame;  
 yet, if you don't laugh,  
 he'll be happy to pay for your wine.

A miserable lover,  
 a not-very-astute *dottore*,  
 an ill-living *frate*,  
 a parasite, the darling of malice,  
 will be your sport today.

And if this material is not worthy —  
 on account of its being so light —  
 of a man who wishes to seem wise and grave,  
 excuse him with this: that he is trying  
 with these vain thoughts  
 to make his wretched time more pleasant,  
 because he has nowhere  
 else to turn his face;  
 for he has been cut off  
 from showing with other undertakings other *virtue*,<sup>12</sup>  
 there being no reward for his labors.

<sup>11</sup>tricked: *ingannate* (feminine).

<sup>12</sup>*virtue*: stage translation: "powers." *Virtù* is a key word in Machiavelli's writings. It is derived from the Latin word *vir*, meaning a "male person" (as opposed to *homō*, a "human being"). The Latin *virtus* (*vir* with the abstract ending *-us*) originally meant "manliness." Thus the Italian *virtù* refers to "valor," "strength," "power," "ability," "efficacy," and related qualities. Machiavelli emphasizes this sense of the word. *Virtù*, like the Latin *virtus*, later acquired the meaning "moral virtue." Machiavelli frequently plays on the ambiguity.

The reward he does expect is that everyone  
 will stand aside and sneer,  
 speaking ill of whatever he sees or hears.  
 This explains, without any doubt,  
 why, in all things, the present age  
 falls off from ancient *virtù*<sup>12b</sup>  
 For, what prevails is that people,  
 seeing that everyone blames,  
 don't labor and strain  
 to make, with a thousand discomforts, a work  
 which the wind will spoil and the fog cover over.

Yet, if anyone thinks that by speaking ill,  
 he can hold the author by his hair  
 and discourage him or make him draw back a bit,  
 I warn him, and say to such a one  
 that the author knows how to speak ill as well as he,  
 and that this was his first art;  
 and that, in every part  
 of the world where *sì* is sounded,<sup>13</sup>  
 he doesn't stand in awe of anyone,  
 even though he might play the servant to one  
 who can wear a better coat than he can.

But let whoever will, speak ill.  
 Let us return to our case,  
 so as not to run overtime too much.  
 We shouldn't pay attention to words,  
 or esteem some monster  
 who doesn't know, perhaps, if he's still alive.  
 Callimaco is coming out  
 and has Siro with him –  
 his servant – and he'll tell  
 the order of everything. Pay attention, everyone,  
 and don't, for now, expect any other summary.

<sup>12b</sup> *virtù*: stage translation: "worth."

<sup>13</sup> *sì*: Italian for "yes": thus, "where Italian is spoken."

cf. Terence's Eunuch

## ACT ONE

### Scene One (*Callimaco, Siro*)

CALLIMACO: Siro, don't leave, I want you for a bit.

SIRO: Here I am.

CALLIMACO: I believe you marvelled at my sudden departure from Paris, and now you marvel since I've been here a month already without doing anything.

SIRO: What you say is true.

CALLIMACO: If I haven't told you until now what I'm going to tell you, it hasn't been because I don't trust you, but because I judge that it's well that a man not speak about the things he doesn't want known if he's not forced to. However, since I think I'll be needing your work, I want to tell you everything.

SIRO: I am your servant, and servants ought never to ask their masters about anything, nor to look into any of their affairs, but when they are told about them by them themselves, they ought to serve them faithfully; so I have done and so I shall do.

CALLIMACO: Of course, I know it. I believe you've heard me tell a thousand times, but it doesn't matter if you hear it a thousand and one,<sup>14</sup> how I was ten years old when I was sent by my guardians — my father and mother being dead — to Paris, where I have been for twenty years. And because at the end of ten years, there began, with the march of Charles,<sup>15</sup> the wars in Italy which ruined this country, I decided to live in Paris and never to repatriate myself, judging that I'd be able to live more securely in that place than here.

<sup>14</sup>A humorous reference to the need for dramatic exposition.

<sup>15</sup>Charles: King Charles VIII of France invaded Italy in 1494-95. The action of the play is set in 1504.

SIRO: It is so.

CALLIMACO: And arranging for all my goods here except for the house to be sold, I adapted myself to living there, where I have been for ten more years with very great happiness...

SIRO: I know it.

CALLIMACO: ...having divided my time – part to studies, part to pleasures, and part to business. And I concerned myself with each of these things in such a way that one didn't get in the way of the others. And on account of this, as you know, I lived most quietly, helping everyone and managing not to offend anyone; so that I seemed to be agreeable to the middle class, to gentlemen, to the foreigner, to the native, to the poor, to the rich.

SIRO: It's the truth.

CALLIMACO: But since it seemed to fortune that I was having too good a time, she made one Camillo Calfucci happen to come to Paris.

SIRO: I'm beginning to guess your trouble.

CALLIMACO: This man, like the other Florentines, often dined with me; and in talking together, it happened one day that we got into a dispute about where the women were more beautiful, in Italy or in France. And because I couldn't talk about Italian women – having been so little when I left – some other Florentine who was present took the side of the French women, and Camillo of the Italian, and after many arguments were put forth on both sides, Camillo said, almost as if he were angry, that even if all the Italian women were monsters, one of his relatives was enough to recover their honor.

SIRO: Now I'm clear about what you mean.

CALLIMACO: And he named Madonna Lucrezia, the wife of Messer Nicia Calfucci, and he spoke such praise for both her beauty and manners, that he left every one of us stupefied; and in me he awakened such a desire to see her that, leaving off every other deliberation, not thinking any more of the wars or peace of Italy, I set out to come here. Having arrived, I have found the reputation<sup>16</sup> of Madonna Lucrezia to be much less than the truth, something which rarely happens, and I am burning with such a desire to be with her, that I don't know where I am.

SIRO: If you'd spoken to me about it in Paris, I'd have known what to advise you, but now I don't know what to tell you.

<sup>16</sup>reputation: *fama*.

CALLIMACO: I haven't told you this because I want your advice, but in part to get it off my chest, and so that you'll get in the spirit to help me when the need requires it.

SIRO: For that I am completely prepared, but what hope do you have here?

CALLIMACO: Alas! None or very little. Let me tell you. In the first place, her nature, which is extremely honest<sup>17</sup>and in all ways alien to the things of love, makes war against me; she has a very rich husband, and one that, in all things, lets himself be governed by her, and if he isn't young, it seems he's not altogether old; she has no relatives or neighbors with whom she comes together at some evening gathering or party, or at any of the other amusements by which young women are usually delighted. Of the tradespeople, none of them comes to her at home, and she has no maid or servant who's not afraid of her, so there's no room there for bribery.

SIRO: Then what do you think you'll be able to do?

CALLIMACO: There's never anything so desperate that there isn't some way of being able to hope for it, and though it might be weak and in vain, the longing and desire that a man has of carrying the thing through make it seem not so.

SIRO: Well then, what makes you hope?

CALLIMACO: Two things: one – the simplicity of Messer Nicia who, although he is a *dottore*, is the simplest and most stupid man in Florence; the other – the longing he and she have for children. Having been married for six years, and not yet having any, and, being very rich, it's a desire they're dying of. There's a third thing, which is that her mother used to be good company. But she's rich so I don't know how to manage it.<sup>18</sup>

SIRO: Have you tried to do anything about it yet?

CALLIMACO: Yes I have, but only a little thing.

SIRO: What?

CALLIMACO: You know Ligurio, who's always coming to eat with me. He was once a marriage broker and later took to begging suppers and dinners. And because he's a pleasant man, Messer Nicia is very familiar with him, and Ligurio plays along; and although Nicia doesn't bring

<sup>17</sup>extremely honest: *onestissima*: the absolute superlative of *onesta*. The word means "chaste" as well.

<sup>18</sup>good company...manage it: *buona compagnia*: a woman of "easy virtue." See Prologue, where Callimaco is identified among the *buon compagni*. Manage it: *governarmene*: elsewhere translated "govern."

him in to eat with him, he does sometimes lend him money. I've made friends with him and have told him about my love; he's promised to help me hand and foot.

SIRO: Watch out that he doesn't trick you; these spongers aren't usually very faithful.

CALLIMACO: That's true. Nevertheless, when someone's got something going for him, you can believe that when you inform him of it, he'll serve you faithfully. I've promised, if he succeeds, to give him a good sum of money; if he doesn't succeed, he'll pick up a lunch and supper out of it, which I wouldn't have eaten alone anyway.

SIRO: What's he promised to do so far?

CALLIMACO: He's promised to persuade Messer Nicia to go with his wife to the baths this May.

SIRO: What's that to you?

CALLIMACO: What's it to me? That place could make her change her nature, because in such spots they do nothing but party. I'd go there and bring in every kind of pleasant amusement I could. I wouldn't leave out any sort of magnificence; I'd make myself the familiar of her and of her husband. What do I know? One thing's born from another thing and time governs it.<sup>19</sup>

SIRO: Not bad.

CALLIMACO: Ligurio left me this morning, and he said that he'd meet with Messer Nicia about this matter<sup>20</sup> and bring me an answer about it.

SIRO: Here they are together.

CALLIMACO: I want to draw aside so as to have time to talk with Ligurio when he gets away from the Dottore. In the meantime, you go into the house about your business, and if I want you to do anything, I'll tell you.

SIRO: I'm going.

### Scene Two (*Messer Nicia, Ligurio*)

NICIA: I believe your advice is good and I spoke about it with my wife last night. She said she'd answer me today, but to tell you the truth, I won't go there on good legs.

LIGURIO: Why?

<sup>19</sup>One thing...it: *Di cosa nasce cosa, e il tempo la governa*: Italian proverb.

<sup>20</sup>matter: *cosa*: elsewhere translated "thing." See the proverb above. See also the phrase *cose del mondo*.

NICIA: Because I'm very unwilling to get off base.<sup>21</sup> Then to have to move wife, maid, household goods; it doesn't square with me. Besides this, I spoke last night with several doctors. One says I should go to San Filippo, another to Porretta, another to Villa,<sup>22</sup> and they seemed to me to be so many big fools; to tell you the truth, these doctors of medicine don't know what they're fishing for.

LIGURIO: And what you said first must worry you because you're not used to losing sight of the cupola.<sup>23</sup>

NICIA: You're wrong! When I was younger I was a great runaround. They never made a fair at Prato that I didn't go to, and there isn't a single village around where I haven't been. And I'll tell you more; I've been to Pisa and Livorno, I have!

LIGURIO: You must have seen the *carrucola*<sup>24</sup> of Pisa.

NICIA: You mean the Verrucola.<sup>25</sup>

LIGURIO: Ah, yes, the Verrucola. At Livorno did you see the sea?

NICIA: You know I saw it!

LIGURIO: How much bigger is it than the Arno?

NICIA: Than the Arno? It's four times, more than six, more than seven you'll make me say; and you see nothing but water, water, water.

LIGURIO: I marvel then, that, having pissed in so many snowbanks, you make such a fuss about going to the baths.

NICIA: You have a mouth full of milk.<sup>26</sup> Does it seem a joke to you to have to rout up the whole house? However, I have such a longing to have children that I'm ready to do anything. But you talk about it a bit with these doctors, see where they advise me to go; and meanwhile I'll be with my wife, and we'll meet again.

LIGURIO: Very well.

<sup>21</sup>get off base: as in the children's game of *pomo*, similar to hide-and-seek.

<sup>22</sup>San Filippo...Villa: places for cures.

<sup>23</sup>Cupola: The dome of the cathedral, Santa Maria del Fiore, in Florence.

<sup>24</sup>*carrucola*: literally, a "pulley," used also to mean a "foolish man."

<sup>25</sup>Verrucola: "little wart." A fortress on the summit of Mount Verruca ("the wart"), east of Pisa.

<sup>26</sup>mouth full of milk: like a baby.

**Scene Three (*Ligurio, Callimaco*)**

LIGURIO: (I don't believe there's a stupider man in the world than this fellow, yet how fortune has favored him! He's rich, he has a beautiful wife, wise, well-mannered, and fit to govern a kingdom. It seems to me that proverb on marriages which says "God makes men and they pair themselves off!" is rarely proven true. Because one often sees that it's the lot of a well-qualified man to end up with a beast, and vice-versa, of a prudent woman to have a madman. But from the madness of this fellow, this good can be gotten, that Callimaco has something to hope for. But there he is.) What are you hanging around for, Callimaco?

CALLIMACO: I saw you with the Dottore and was waiting for you to get away from him in order to hear what you've done.

LIGURIO: You know what kind of man he is, of little prudence, less spirit, and he's very unwilling to leave Florence. Still, I warmed him up to it and he told me at last that he'll do anything. I believe that if this departure pleases us, we can lead him to it; but I don't know if we'll get what we need out of it.

CALLIMACO: Why?

LIGURIO: What do I know? You know that all kinds of people go to these baths, and a man could come there who'd like Madonna Lucrezia as much as you do, who might be richer than you, or more gracious than you; so you risk the danger of enduring this trouble for others, and it might come about that plenty of competitors would make her harder, or that, being tamed, she might turn to another and not to you.

CALLIMACO: I know what you say is true. But what can I do? What course can I take? Where can I turn? I've got to try something, be it great, dangerous, harmful, scandalous. Better to die than to live like this. If I could sleep at night, if I could eat, if I could converse, if I could take pleasure in anything, I would be more patient and wait for the right time. But there's no remedy here, and if I don't hold on to hope through some course, I'll die no matter what; and seeing I have to die, I'm not afraid of anything, but will take any course – bestial, cruel, nefarious...

LIGURIO: Don't speak like that. Curb such a rush of spirit.

CALLIMACO: You see well enough that by curbing it, I only feed such thoughts. So, it's necessary that we either follow through with sending him to the baths, or that we come up with some other way, so I can feed myself with some hope – at least if not true, false – by which I can nourish a thought which might partly relieve my many worries.

LIGURIO: You're right, and I'm ready to do it.

CALLIMACO: I believe it, even though I know that the likes of you live by cheating men. Nevertheless, I don't believe myself to be in that number, because if you did and I realized it, I'd try to get revenge for it, and you'd at once lose the use of my house and the hope of having what I've promised you for the future.

LIGURIO: Don't doubt my faith, because even if the profit I sense and hope for were not here, your blood is in accord with mine, and I desire for you to satisfy this desire of yours almost as much as you do yourself. But let's let this go. The Dottore has commissioned me to find a doctor and learn which bath would be good to go to. I want you to do it my way, and that's to say you've studied medicine and have had some experience in Paris; he'll easily believe it because of his simplicity and because you're educated and can say something to him in Latin.

CALLIMACO: How will this serve us?

LIGURIO: It will serve to send him to whatever bath we want and to take up some other course I have thought up, which will be shorter, more certain, more likely to succeed than the baths.

CALLIMACO: What are you saying?

LIGURIO: I'm saying that if you'll keep your spirit up and trust in me, I'll have this thing done for you before this time tomorrow. And even if he were the man he is not, and investigated whether you are or are not a doctor, the shortness of the time, the thing in itself, will keep him from talking about it, or there won't be time to spoil our design, even if he did talk about it.<sup>27</sup>

CALLIMACO: You're bringing me back to life. This is too great a promise, and you're feeding me too great a hope. What will you do?

LIGURIO: You'll know when the time comes. I don't need to tell it to you now; we're going to lack time for doing, much less talking. You go into the house and wait for me there, and I'll go find the Dottore; and if I bring him to you, go along with what I say and accomodate yourself to that.

CALLIMACO: So I will, though you're filling me with a hope that I fear will go up in smoke.

<sup>27</sup>talking about it: *ragionerà*: or "figuring it out."

talk about it: *ragionassi*: or "figure it out."

Song<sup>28</sup> (*after the first act*)

He who makes no test, Love,  
of your great power, hopes in vain  
ever to bear true witness to  
what might be the highest worth of heaven;  
nor does he know how, at the same time, one can live and die,  
how one can pursue harm and flee from good,  
how one can love oneself  
less than others, how often  
fear and hope freeze and melt hearts;  
nor does he know how men and gods alike  
dread the arms with which you are armed.

<sup>28</sup>The rhyme scheme of the Song is: abbaacddceee. The same song follows Act One of *Clizia*.

## ACT TWO

### **Scene One (*Ligurio, Messer Nicia, Siro*)**

LIGURIO: As I've told you, I believe that God has sent us this man so that you can satisfy your desire. He's had great experience in Paris, and don't marvel that he hasn't made a profession of the art in Florence, because there are reasons for it; first, he's rich, second, he's about to return to Paris at any time.

NICIA: Now brother, this is very important; because I wouldn't want him to get me into the woods and then leave me high and dry.

LIGURIO: Have no doubt about that; fear only that he won't want to take on this cure; but if he does take it on, he won't leave it until he's seen it through to the end.

NICIA: For that part I'm willing to trust you, but about his knowledge I'll tell you myself, after I talk with him, whether he's a man of learning, because he won't sell me empty bladders!

LIGURIO: Because I know you, I'm bringing you to him so you can talk to him. And if after you've spoken to him, he doesn't seem to you, in presence, in learning, in speech, a man in whose lap you can lay your head, say that I'm not myself.

NICIA: So be it, in the name of the Holy Lamb! Let's go. But where is he staying?

LIGURIO: He's in this piazza, in that doorway you see opposite you.

NICIA: Be quick.

LIGURIO: There, it's done.

SIRO: Who is it?

LIGURIO: Is Callimaco there?

SIRO: Yes, he is.

NICIA: Why don't you say *Maestro* Callimaco?

LIGURIO: He doesn't care about such trifles.

NICIA: Don't talk that way; do what you should, and if he takes it badly, let him loosen his belt!<sup>29</sup>

### Scene Two (*Callimaco, Messer Nicia, Ligurio*)

CALLIMACO: Who is it that wants me?

NICIA: *Bona dies, domine magister.*

CALLIMACO: *Et vobis bona, domine doctor.*<sup>30</sup>

LIGURIO: How does he seem to you?

NICIA: Good, by the Apostles!

LIGURIO: If you want me to stay here with you, you'll speak so I understand you; otherwise we'll be making two fires.

CALLIMACO: On what good business do you come?

NICIA: What do I know? I'm looking for two things which someone else would probably flee; that is, to make trouble for myself and for others. I have no children and I would like some, and in order to have this trouble I come to bother you.

CALLIMACO: May it never be disagreeable to me to do a favor for you and for all virtuous<sup>31</sup> and good men like you; and I haven't tired myself out for so many years studying in Paris for anything other than to be able to serve those like you.

NICIA: *Gran mercé.*<sup>32</sup> And if you have need of my art, I'll willingly serve you. But let us return *ad rem nostram.*<sup>33</sup> Have you thought about which bath would be good to dispose my wife to become pregnant? For I know that Ligurio here has told you – what he might have told you.

CALLIMACO: That's true; but in order to satisfy your desire, it's necessary to know the cause of your wife's sterility, because there could be many causes. *Nam causae sterilitatis sunt: aut in semine, aut in matrice, aut in strumentis seminariis, aut in virga, aut in causa extrinseca.*<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup>loosen his belt: *scingasi*: stage translation: "let him lump it," with the additional suggestion of losing his pants.

<sup>30</sup>*Bona...doctor*: "Good day, *domine* master.

And a good one to you, *Domine Dottore*" (Latin).

<sup>31</sup>virtuous: *virtuosi*.

<sup>32</sup>*Gran mercé*: "many thanks" (French).

<sup>33</sup>*ad rem nostram*: "to our business" (Latin).

<sup>34</sup>*Nam...extrinseca*: "For the causes of sterility are either in the semen, or in the womb, or in the seminal organs, or in the penis, or in an extrinsic cause" (Latin).

NICIA: (This fellow is the most worthy man one could find!)

CALLIMACO: Other than this, this sterility could be caused by your impotence, and if this were so, there wouldn't be any remedy for it.

NICIA: Me impotent? Oh! You make me laugh! I don't believe there's a tougher or more robust man than I am in Florence.

CALLIMACO: If that's not it, rest assured that we will find you some remedy.

NICIA: Would there be any remedy for it other than the baths? Because I don't want that inconvenience, and my wife would leave Florence unwillingly!

LIGURIO: Yes, there is! I want to answer that myself. Callimaco is so reserved that he is too much so. Haven't you told me you know how to prepare certain potions which undoubtedly cause pregnancy?

CALLIMACO: Yes I have. But I hold back with men I don't know, because I don't want to be taken for a charlatan.

NICIA: Have no fear about me, because you've made me marvel so, that there's nothing I wouldn't believe or do if you had a hand in it.

LIGURIO: I believe it's necessary that you see a specimen.

CALLIMACO: Without a doubt; nothing can be done without one.

LIGURIO: Call Siro, who'll go with the Dottore to his house for it and return here, and we'll wait for him in the house.

CALLIMACO: Siro, go with him. And if it suits you, Messer, return here immediately, and we'll think up something good.

NICIA: What! If it suits me? I'll return here in an instant, because I have more faith in you than the Hungarians have in their swords.

### Scene Three (*Messer Nicia, Siro*)

NICIA: This master of yours is a very worthy man.

SIRO: More than you can say.

NICIA: The king of France must hold him in great account.

SIRO: Great.

NICIA: And for that reason he must stay willingly in France.

SIRO: So I believe.

NICIA: And he does well to do so. In this city there are none who aren't shitsticks; here they don't appreciate any *virtù*.<sup>35</sup> If he were to stay here there wouldn't be a man who'd even take a look at his face. I know

<sup>35</sup>*virtù*: stage translation: "worth."

how to talk about it because I've shit my guts out in order to learn two aitches;<sup>36</sup> and if I had to live on it, I can tell you, I'd be out in the cold!

SIRO: Do you earn<sup>37</sup> a hundred ducats a year?

NICIA: Not a hundred *lige*, not a hundred *grossi*, even! And this is because in this city someone like us who doesn't have status doesn't find a dog to bark at him, and we aren't good for anything other than to go to funerals, or to wedding parties, or to be loafing around all day on the Proconsul's bench. But I don't bother with them; I don't need anybody; let those who are worse off than I am do it. But I wouldn't want it known that these were my words, because I'd certainly get some tax or some leek in my backside that would make me sweat.

SIRO: Have no fear.

NICIA: We're home. Wait for me here; I'll return right away.

SIRO: Go ahead.

### Scene Four (*Siro alone*)

SIRO: If the other *dottori* were like this one, we would take stones for ovens.<sup>38</sup> Yes, for this wretch Ligurio and this mad master of mine are leading him to a place where they will shame him! And truly, I'd desire it, if I believed that it wouldn't become known; because if it were known, I'd be in danger of my life, and my master of his life and property. He's already become a doctor; I don't know what, their design is or where this trick of theirs is heading. But here is the Dottore who has a urine bottle in his hand. Who wouldn't laugh at this big fool?

### Scene Five (*Messer Nicia, Siro*)

NICIA:<sup>39</sup> I've done everything your way; in this I want you to do mine. If I'd believed I wasn't going to have any children, I'd sooner have taken a country girl for a wife. — Is that you, Siro? Come along behind me. How much labor I've endured to make this stupid woman give me this specimen! And it doesn't mean she doesn't care about having children,

<sup>36</sup>two aitches: "not very much," since Italian has few "h" sounds. Perhaps also a reference to schoolbook Latin formulas. Stage translation: "...to learn a little Latin..."

<sup>37</sup>earn: *guadagnate*. See note on Callimaco in the Note on Names of Characters.

<sup>38</sup>take stones for ovens: stage translation: "act like madmen." See Machiavelli's letter to Guicciardini, October 16-20, 1525.

<sup>39</sup>He speaks at first to Lucrezia, who remains within, then, perhaps, to himself, then to Siro.

because she thinks about it more than I do; but as soon as I want to make her do the least little thing, I get a big story!

SIRO: Have patience. With kind words women are usually led where others wish.

NICIA: What kind words! After she's worn me out! Go quick, tell the Maestro and Ligurio I'm here.

SIRO: Here they are, coming out.

### Scene Six (*Ligurio, Callimaco, Messer Nicia*)

LIGURIO: The Dottore will be easy to persuade; the wife will make trouble, but we won't lack a way around this.

CALLIMACO: Do you have the specimen?

NICIA: Siro has it, under his coat.

CALLIMACO: Give it here. Oh! This specimen shows weakness of the kidneys.

NICIA: It does seem cloudy to me, and yet she's just now made it.

CALLIMACO: Don't marvel at it. *Nam mulieris urinae sunt semper maioris grossitiei et albedinis et minoris pulchritudinis quam virorum. Huius autem, in caetera, causa est amplitudo canalium, mixtio eorum quae ex matrice exeunt cum urina.*<sup>40</sup>

NICIA: (Oh oh, Saint Puccio's<sup>41</sup> pussy! This man's getting subtler and subtler between my hands; look how well he talks about these things!)

CALLIMACO: I am afraid she might be badly covered at night, and for this reason makes cloudy urine.

NICIA: She always has a good quilt over her, but she stays on her knees for four hours, stringing together Our Fathers before she comes to bed, and she's a beast for enduring cold.

CALLIMACO: In conclusion, Dottore, either you have faith in me or not, either I have a sure remedy to teach you or not. For myself, I'll give you the remedy. If you have faith in me, you'll take it, and if, one year from today, your wife doesn't have her own son in her arms, I'm willing to have to give you two thousand ducats.

<sup>40</sup>*Nam...urina*: "For the urine of women is always of more thickness and whiteness and of less beauty than that of men. Now among other things, the cause of this is the large size of the canals, the mixture of those things that go out of the womb with the urine" (Latin).

<sup>41</sup>Puccio: not the Christian name of anybody canonized by the Roman Catholic church. See Act Four, Scene Nine, Note 78.

NICIA: Speak then, because I'm ready to honor you in everything, and to believe in you more than in my confessor.

CALLIMACO: You have to understand this, that there's nothing more certain to make a woman pregnant than to give her a potion made from *mandragola*<sup>42</sup> to drink. This is something I've tested two pairs of times and always found true; and if it weren't for this, the queen of France would be sterile, and countless other princesses of that state.

NICIA: Is it possible?

CALLIMACO: It's as I tell you. And fortune has so favored you that I've brought with me all those things which are put in that potion, and you have them at your disposal.

NICIA: When would she have to take it?

CALLIMACO: This evening after supper, because the moon is well-disposed and the time can't be more appropriate.

NICIA: This won't be such a big thing. Get it in order, by all means; I'll make her take it.

CALLIMACO: Now it's necessary to think about this: that the man who first has to do with her after she has taken this potion dies within eight days, and all the world can't save him.

NICIA: Bloody shit! I don't want this sugar and vinegar; you won't stick it on me. You've fixed me good!

CALLIMACO: Stand firm, there's a remedy here.

NICIA: What?

CALLIMACO: Make another man sleep with her immediately, stay one night with her, and draw off all that infection of the *mandragola* to himself. After that, you can lie with her yourself without danger.

NICIA: I don't want to do this.

CALLIMACO: Why?

NICIA: Because I don't want to make my wife a whore and myself a cuckold.

CALLIMACO: What are you saying, Dottore? Oh, I don't have in you as wise a man as I believed. So you fear to do what the king of France, and as many lords as are there, have done?

NICIA: Who do you want me to find who would do this mad thing? If I tell him about it, he won't be willing; if I don't tell him, I'm betraying him, and it's a case for the Eight.<sup>43</sup> I don't want to end up in trouble there.

CALLIMACO: If nothing other than this troubles you, let me take care of it.

<sup>42</sup>*mandragola*: "mandrake": a plant of the nightshade family, found in Mediterranean regions; in folklore and legend said to increase potency and fertility.

<sup>43</sup>the Eight: the Florentine criminal tribunal.

NICIA: How will you do it?

CALLIMACO: I'll tell you. I'll give you the potion tonight after supper; you'll give it to her to drink, and put her to bed at once. That'll be about ten<sup>44</sup> o'clock in the evening. Then we'll disguise ourselves – you, Ligurio, Siro, and I – and go searching in New Market, in Old Market, through places like these; and the first idle young fellow we find, we'll put a bag over his head, and to the sound of blows we'll lead him home and into your bedroom in the dark. There we'll put him into bed, telling him what he has to do; there won't be any difficulty at all. Then in the morning you'll send him away before daybreak, you'll make your wife bathe, and you can be with her at your pleasure and without danger.

NICIA: I agree, since you say that the king and princes and lords have taken this way. But above all, don't let it be known, for love of the Eight!

CALLIMACO: Who do you think would tell it?

NICIA: One task remains, and it's an important one.

CALLIMACO: What?

NICIA: To make my wife agree to it, something I don't believe she'll ever be disposed to do.

CALLIMACO: What you say is true. But I wouldn't want to be a husband if I couldn't dispose my wife to do things my way.

LIGURIO: I've thought of the remedy.

NICIA: What?

LIGURIO: By way of her confessor.

CALLIMACO: Who'll dispose the confessor?

LIGURIO: You, I, money, our wickedness, theirs.

NICIA: If nothing else, I'm afraid that, for anything I say, she won't be willing to go talk to the confessor.

LIGURIO: There's also a remedy for this.

CALLIMACO: Tell me!

LIGURIO: To have her led to him by her mother.

NICIA: She has faith in her.

LIGURIO: And I know that her mother is of our opinion. Come on, we're letting time go by, it's getting on towards evening. Callimaco, get going, and make sure that at eight<sup>45</sup> o'clock we find you at the house with the potion in order. We'll go to her mother's house, the Dottore and I, to prepare her, because I'm acquainted with her. Then we'll go to the Frate, and we'll report to you what we have done.

<sup>44</sup>ten: the text reads "four," according to the old Italian custom of numbering from sunset to sunset, beginning at approximately six p.m.

<sup>45</sup>eight: the text reads "two."

CALLIMACO: Oh, don't leave me alone.

LIGURIO: You seem stewed to me.

CALLIMACO: Where do you want me to go now?

LIGURIO: Here, there, through this street, through that other; Florence is so big!

CALLIMACO: I am dead.

### *Song<sup>46</sup> (after the second act)*

Everyone can see for himself how happy is he  
who is born stupid and believes everything!

Ambition does not press him,

fear does not move him —

these are usually the seeds

of weariness and of sorrow.

This Dottore of yours,

longing<sup>47</sup> to have children,

would believe that an ass flies:

and he has forgotten every other good,<sup>48</sup>

and only on this has he set his desire.

<sup>46</sup>The rhyme scheme of the Song is: aabcbccdee.

<sup>47</sup>longing: *bramando*, perhaps with a pun on *bramendo*, "braying," like the ass in the next line.  
See Prologue, Note 10.

<sup>48</sup>and . . . good: or "and everything else he has really forgotten."

## ACT THREE

### Scene One (*Sosstrata, Messer Nicia, Ligurio*)

**SOSTRATA:** I've always heard it said that it's the duty of a prudent person to take the best among bad courses. If to have children, you have no other remedy, then you'll want to take this one, if it doesn't weigh upon the conscience.

**NICIA:** It is so.

**LIGURIO:** You go find your daughter, and Messer and I will go find Frate Timoteo, her confessor, and relate the case to him, so that you won't have to tell him. You'll see what he says to you.

**SOSTRATA:** So it will be done. Your way is over there, and I'm going to find Lucrezia and bring her to talk with the Frate, no matter what.

### Scene Two (*Messer Nicia, Ligurio*)

**NICIA:** Perhaps you marvel, Ligurio, that it's necessary to make up so many stories to prepare my wife; but if you knew everything you wouldn't marvel.

**LIGURIO:** I believe it's because all women are suspicious.

**NICIA:** It's not that. She used to be the sweetest person in the world, and the most easy-going, but when one of her neighbors said that, if she vowed to hear the first mass at the Servi<sup>49</sup> for forty mornings, she'd become pregnant, she vowed it and went for perhaps twenty mornings. Well, wouldn't you know, one of those big *frati* began to hang around her so she didn't want to return there any more. It's really bad, though,

<sup>49</sup>Servi: church of the Servites (Servi di Maria), Santissima Annunziata.

that those who should be giving us good examples are like this. Isn't what I say true?

LIGURIO: The devil, it's true!

NICIA: From that time till now, she's had ears like a rabbit; and when the least little thing is said to her, she finds a thousand difficulties in it.

LIGURIO: I no longer marvel. But that vow, how <sup>v</sup> is it satisfied?

NICIA: We had it dispensed.

LIGURIO: That's good. But if you've got them, give me twenty-five ducats, because in these cases it's necessary to spend money and quickly make oneself the *frate's* friend and give him hope for better.

NICIA: Take them then; this doesn't trouble me, I'll economize elsewhere.

LIGURIO: These *frati* are cunning, astute; and it stands to reason, because they know our sins and their own; and whoever isn't used to them could be tricked, and not know how to lead one to his purpose. Therefore, I wouldn't want you to spoil everything by talking, because someone like you, who stays in his study all day, understands those books, and doesn't know how to talk about<sup>50a</sup> the things of the world.<sup>50b</sup>  
(This fellow is so stupid that I'm afraid he might spoil everything.)

NICIA: Tell me what you want me to do.

LIGURIO: Leave the talking to me, and never speak if I don't signal to you.

NICIA: I agree. What signal will you make?

LIGURIO: I'll close one eye, and bite my lip. Oh, no! Let's do something else. How long is it since you spoke to the Frate?

NICIA: It's more than ten years.

LIGURIO: That's good. I'll tell him you've gotten deaf, and you won't answer or ever say anything if we don't speak loudly.

NICIA: I'll do it.

LIGURIO: Don't worry if I say anything that seems to you different from what we want, because all will turn out to the purpose.

NICIA: In good time.

### Scene Three (*Frato Timoteo, a Woman*)

TIMOTEO: If you want to confess, I'll do what you want.

WOMAN: Not today; someone's waiting for me; and it's enough for me to have unbosomed myself a bit right here. Have you said those masses of Our Lady?

TIMOTEO: Yes, Madonna.

<sup>50a</sup>to talk about: *ragionare*: or "to figure out."

<sup>50b</sup>things of the world: See Introduction, page 4.

**WOMAN:** Now take this florin, and every Monday for two months, say the mass of the dead for the soul of my husband. Even though he was a big nasty man, still the flesh does pull; I can't help feeling it again<sup>51</sup> when I remember it. But do you believe that he's in purgatory?

**TIMOTEO:** Without a doubt!

**WOMAN:** I really don't know that. You know well what he did to me sometimes. Oh, how much I complained about it to you! I stayed out of his way as much as I could; but he was so insistent! Oh Lord!

**TIMOTEO:** Have no doubt, the clemency of God is great; if a man doesn't lack the will, he will never lack time to repent.

**WOMAN:** Do you believe that the Turk is coming into Italy this year?<sup>52</sup>

**TIMOTEO:** If you don't say your prayers, yes.

**WOMAN:** My faith! God help us with these deviltries! I have great fear of that impaling.<sup>53</sup> But I see here in church a woman who has some thread of mine; I want to go meet her. Have a good day!

**TIMOTEO:** Go in health!

#### Scene Four (*Frate Timoteo, Ligurio, Messer Nicia*)

**TIMOTEO:** The most charitable people there are are women – and the most annoying. Whoever drives them away avoids both annoyances and profit; whoever deals with them gets the profit and the annoyances together. And it's the truth that there's no honey without flies. – How are you doing, good men? Don't I recognize Messer Nicia?

**LIGURIO:** Speak loudly, because he's gotten so deaf that he no longer hears anything.

**TIMOTEO:** You are welcome, Messer!

**LIGURIO:** Louder!

**TIMOTEO:** Welcome!

**NICIA:** Well met, Padre!

**TIMOTEO:** How are things going with you?

**NICIA:** Very well.

**LIGURIO:** Turn and talk to me, Padre, because, if you want him to hear you, you'll have to fill this piazza with noise.

<sup>51</sup>feeling it again: or "feeling sorry".

<sup>52</sup>A widespread fear in Italy after the Turkish capture of Otronto in 1480. The woman's fear is shared by the Friars Minor whom Machiavelli describes to Guicciardini (May 18, 1521) in a letter from Carpi.

<sup>53</sup>Turkish method of torture and execution, here with sexual innuendo.

TIMOTEO: What do you want from me?

LIGURIO: Messer Nicia here and another good man, whom you'll hear about later, are going to have several hundred ducats distributed in alms.

NICIA: Bloody shit!

LIGURIO: (Keep quiet, damn you, it won't be much.) Don't marvel at anything he says, Padre, because he doesn't hear, and sometimes it seems to him that he hears, but he doesn't respond to the purpose.

TIMOTEO: Continue then, and let him say whatever he wants.

LIGURIO: I have part of that money with me, and they have designated that you be the one to distribute it.

TIMOTEO: Very willingly.

LIGURIO: But it is necessary, before these alms are given, that you help us with a strange case that's come up for Messer — and only you can help — on which all the honor of his house depends.

TIMOTEO: What is it?

LIGURIO: I don't know if you know Cammillo Calfucci, nephew of Messer here.

TIMOTEO: Yes, I know him.

LIGURIO: A year ago, this man went to France on some business of his, and, not having a wife — for she had died — he left his one marriageable daughter in the care of a convent, the name of which I don't have to tell you now.

TIMOTEO: What followed?

LIGURIO: It followed that, either through the carelessness of the nuns, or the brainlessness of the girl, she finds herself four months pregnant; so that if the situation's not repaired with prudence, the Dottore, the nuns, the girl, Cammillo, and the house of Calfucci will be disgraced; and the Dottore regards this shame as so great that he has vowed, if it's not disclosed, to give three hundred ducats for the love of God.

NICIA: (What chitterchatter!)

LIGURIO: (Be quiet.) And he will give them through your hands; and only you and the abbess can remedy this.

TIMOTEO: How?

LIGURIO: By persuading the abbess to give the girl a potion to make her miscarry.

TIMOTEO: This is something to be thought over.

LIGURIO: Keep in mind, in doing this, how many goods will result from it; you maintain the honor of the convent, of the girl, of her relatives; you restore a daughter to her father; you satisfy Messer here, and so many of his relatives; you do as much charity as you can with these

three hundred ducats; and on the other side, you don't offend anything but a piece of unborn flesh, without sense, which could be dispersed in a thousand ways; and I believe that good is that which does good to the most, and that by which the most are contented.

**TIMOTEO:** So be it in the name of God. I'll do what you want, and may everything be done for God and for charity. Tell me the convent, give me the potion, and if you like, this money, with which I can begin to do some good.

**LIGURIO:** Now you seem to me that man of religion that I believed you were. Take this part of the money. The convent is...but wait, there's a woman in the church who's beckoning to me; I'll be right back, don't leave Messer Nicia; I want to say a couple of words to her.

### Scene Five (*Frate Timoteo, Messer Nicia*)

**TIMOTEO:** This girl, how old is she?

**NICIA:** (I'm bewildered.)

**TIMOTEO:** I say, how old is this girl?

**NICIA:** May God give him trouble!

**TIMOTEO:** Why?

**NICIA:** So he'll have it!

**TIMOTEO:** (I seem to be caught in a web. I'm dealing with a madman and a deaf one. One flees, the other doesn't hear. But if these aren't fake coins, I'll make out better than they will! Here's Ligurio coming back.)

### Scene Six (*Ligurio, Frate Timoteo, Messer Nicia*)

**LIGURIO:** (Be quiet, Messer.) Oh, I have great news, Padre!

**TIMOTEO:** What?

**LIGURIO:** That woman I spoke with has told me that the girl has miscarried all by herself.

**TIMOTEO:** Fine, these alms will go to the Grascia<sup>54</sup>.

**LIGURIO:** What do you say?

**TIMOTEO:** I say that you ought all the more to give these alms.

<sup>54</sup>Grascia: The office of the fiscal magistrate was at one time called the Grascia. Some translators give "go off like grease [in the fire]" because *grascia* (with a small "g") means "grease." Stage translation: "Treasury."

LIGURIO: The alms will be given when you want; but it's necessary that you do something else for the benefit of the Dottore here.

TIMOTEO: What is it?

LIGURIO: Something less burdensome, less scandalous, more agreeable to us, more profitable to you.

TIMOTEO: What is it? I'm on such terms with you, and I seem to have contracted such an intimacy, that there isn't a thing I wouldn't do.

LIGURIO: I want to tell it to you in the church, between you and me, if the Dottore will agree to wait here. We'll return soon.

NICIA: (As the toad said to the harrow!)<sup>55</sup>

TIMOTEO: Let's go.

### Scene Seven (*Messer Nicia alone*)

NICIA: Is it day or night? Am I awake or dreaming? Am I drunk – though I haven't had a drink yet today – to go along with this chitterchat? We no sooner agree to say one thing to the Frate, and he says another to him; then he wants me to act deaf, and I would have to stop up my ears like the Dane,<sup>56</sup> not to have heard the mad things he said, and God knows to what purpose! I find myself out twenty-five ducats, and my business hasn't been talked about yet, and now they've planted me here like a friedcake on a peg.<sup>57</sup> But here they are, coming back. A curse on them, if they haven't talked about my business!

### Scene Eight (*Frate Timoteo, Ligurio, Messer Nicia*)

TIMOTEO: Have the women come. I know what I have to do, and if my authority is worth anything, we'll conclude this match tonight.

LIGURIO: Messer Nicia, Frate Timoteo is going to do everything. It's necessary to see that the women come.

<sup>55</sup>As the toad said to the harrow: the proverbial toad, who had been run over, did not invite the harrow to return. See Machiavelli's letter to Guicciardini, October 16-20, 1525. Stage translation: "good riddance."

<sup>56</sup>the Dane: Ogier, a romance hero who stopped up his own and his horse's ears to avoid hearing the shout of his enemy. Stage translation: "like the Dane in the story."

<sup>57</sup>planted me here like a friedcake on a peg: *m'banno qui posto come un zugo, a piuolo*: proverbial for a person who's been left and has no choice but to wait. *Posto...a piuolo* is used in reference to beans or lettuce planted in the earth in holes made with a wooden stick. Zugo, a friedcake formed on a stick, signifies a "fool" or "dupe," and, by resemblance, also suggests the male sex organ.

NICIA: You remake me completely. Will it be a boy?

LIGURIO: A boy.

NICIA: I weep with tenderness.

TIMOTEO: Go into the church. I'll wait here for the women. Stay inside so they won't see you, and when they've left, I'll tell you what they said.

### Scene Nine (*Frate Timoteo alone*)

TIMOTEO: I don't know which one has duped the other. This wretch Ligurio came to me with that first story to try me out, so that if I didn't consent to it, he wouldn't have told me this one, so as not to reveal their designs without profit; and they didn't care about the false one. It's true that I've been duped; nevertheless, this trick is to my profit. Messer Nicia and Callimaco are rich, and, in different ways, I'll get a lot from each of them; it's convenient for the thing to be kept secret, because telling it matters as much to them as to me. Be that as it may, I don't repent of it. It's quite true that I'm afraid there will be difficulty, because Madonna Lucrezia is wise and good; but I'll dupe her by her goodness. All women have few brains,<sup>58</sup> and if there's one of them who knows how to say two words, it's preached about, because in the city of the blind, whoever has one eye is lord. Here she is with her mother, who's really a beast, and will be a great help in leading her to my wishes.

### Scene Ten (*Sistrata, Lucrezia*)

SISTRATA: I believe that you believe, my daughter, that I esteem your honor as much as anyone in the world, and that I wouldn't advise you to do anything that wasn't good. I have told you and tell you again that if Frate Timoteo tells you that there's no burden of conscience here, you may do it without thinking about it.

LUCREZIA: I've always feared that Messer Nicia's longing to have children would make us commit some error and, because of this, whenever he's spoken to me about something, I've been on guard and suspicious of it, especially after what you know happened to me by going to the Servi.

<sup>58</sup>few brains: *poco cervella*. He says the same thing about his *frati*. See Act Five, Scene One.

But of all the things that have been attempted, this seems to me the most strange: to have to submit my body to this disgrace, to be the cause that a man might die for disgracing me; because if I were the only woman remaining in the world and if human nature had to rise again from me, I couldn't believe that such a course would be allowed to me.

SOSTRATA: I don't know how to tell you so many things, my daughter. You'll talk to the Frate, see what he says to you, and then you'll do what you're advised by him, by us, and by whoever wishes you well.

LUCREZIA: I'm in a sweat from what I'm going through.<sup>59</sup>

### Scene Eleven (*Frate Timoteo, Lucrezia, Sostrata*)

TIMOTEO: You are welcome! I know what you want to hear about from me because Messer Nicia has spoken to me. Truly, I have been at my books more than two hours studying this case, and after much examination, I find many things both in particular and in general, that work for us.

LUCREZIA: Do you speak in truth, or are you jesting?

TIMOTEO: Ah, Madonna Lucrezia! Are these things to jest about? Don't you know me yet?

LUCREZIA: Padre, no; but this seems to me the strangest thing that ever was heard.

TIMOTEO: Madonna, I believe you, but I don't want you to say so any more. There are many things that from far away seem terrible, unbearable, strange, and when you get near them, they turn out to be humane, bearable, familiar; and so it is said that fears are worse than evils themselves; and this is one of those things.

LUCREZIA: God be willing!

TIMOTEO: I want to return to what I said earlier. As to the conscience, you have to take this general principle: that where there is a certain good and an uncertain evil, one should never leave that good for fear of that evil. Here is a certain good, that you will become pregnant, will acquire a soul for our Lord. The uncertain evil is that the one who will lie with you after you take the potion may die; but those who don't die are also found. But because the thing is doubtful, it is therefore well

<sup>59</sup>what I'm going through: *passione*.

that Messer Nicia not run that risk. As to the act, that it might be a sin, this is a fable, because the will is what sins, not the body; and what causes it to be a sin is displeasing your husband — but you please him; taking pleasure in it — but you have no pleasure from it. Besides this, the end has to be looked to in all things; your end is to fill a seat in paradise, to make your husband happy. The Bible says that the daughters of Lot, believing themselves alone in the world, lay with their father;<sup>60</sup> and because their intention was good, they didn't sin.

LUCREZIA: What are you persuading me to?

SOSTRATA: Let yourself be persuaded, my daughter. Don't you see that a woman who has no children has no home? Her husband dies, she's left like a beast, abandoned by everyone.

TIMOTEO: I swear to you, Madonna, by this consecrated breast, that to obey your husband in this case is as much a matter of conscience as eating meat on Wednesday,<sup>61</sup> which is a sin that goes away with holy water.

LUCREZIA: What are you leading me to, Padre?

TIMOTEO: I'm leading you to something for which you'll always have reason to pray to God for me, and this will satisfy you more next year than now.

SOSTRATA: She'll do what you want. I will put her to bed tonight myself. What are you afraid of, sniveller? There are fifty women in this city who would raise up their hands to heaven for it.

LUCREZIA: I agree, but I don't believe that I shall be alive at all tomorrow morning.

TIMOTEO: Do not fear, my daughter; I will pray to God for you, I will say the prayer of the angel Raphael so that he'll accompany you.<sup>62</sup> Go quickly and prepare yourself for this mystery, because it's getting on toward evening.

SOSTRATA: Peace be with you, Padre.

LUCREZIA: God help me, and Our Lady, that I don't come to harm!

<sup>60</sup>See Genesis 19.

<sup>61</sup>eating...Wednesday: Wednesdays were fast days during the four weeks of the Advent season.

<sup>62</sup>Raphael...you: as he accompanies Tobias (in the apocryphal book of Tobit) when he goes to claim Sarah as his wife. Raphael tells Tobias to burn the heart and liver of a fish in order to protect himself from her demon lover Asmodeus, who had killed each of her seven other husbands on their wedding nights. This remedy drives the demon away and makes possible Tobias' marriage. In Hebrew the angel's name means "God has healed."

**Scene Twelve (*Frate Timoteo, Ligurio, Messer Nicia*)**

TIMOTEO: Oh, Ligurio, come out here!

LIGURIO: How's it going?

TIMOTEO: Fine. They've gone home, disposed to do everything and there won't be any difficulty, because her mother's going to stay with her and wants to put her to bed herself.

NICIA: Are you telling the truth?

TIMOTEO: Well, well, you're cured of deafness!

LIGURIO: Saint Clement has been gracious to him.

TIMOTEO: You might want to set up a votive image there<sup>63</sup> to raise a bit of a stir so that I could share this gain<sup>64</sup> with you.

NICIA: We're getting off into etceteras. Will my wife make any difficulty about doing what I want?

TIMOTEO: No, I tell you.

NICIA: I'm the happiest man in the world.

TIMOTEO: I believe it. You'll peck up a baby boy for yourself, and may he who has not, have not!<sup>65</sup>

LIGURIO: You go to your prayers, Frate, and if anything else is needed, we'll come find you. You, Messer, go to her, to hold her firm in this opinion, and I will go find Maestro Callimaco so that he'll send you the potion. And make sure I see you again at seven o'clock to get in order what is to be done at ten.<sup>66</sup>

NICIA: Very well; good-bye!

TIMOTEO: Go in health!

<sup>63</sup>there: at St. Clement's altar, in thanksgiving for his cure. Stage translation: "at his altar."

<sup>64</sup>gain: *guadagno*. See note on Callimaco in the Note on Names of Characters.

<sup>65</sup>may . . . not: *chi non ba non abbia*: Italian proverb.

<sup>66</sup>seven . . . ten: the text reads "one" and "four."

*Song<sup>67</sup>(after the third act)*

How pleasant is the trick  
conducted to its imagined and dear end,  
that rids one of worry  
and makes every bitter thing that's tasted sweet.  
Oh, remedy high and rare,  
you show the straight path to wandering souls;  
you, with your great valor,  
in making others blessed you make Love rich;  
you conquer, with your holy counsels alone,  
stones, venoms, and enchantments.

<sup>67</sup>The rhyme scheme of the Song is: ababbcdcc. The same Song follows Act Four of *Clizia*.

## ACT FOUR

### Scene One (*Callimaco alone*)

CALLIMACO: I'd really like to hear what those fellows have done. Can it be that I might not see Ligurio again? It's not just five o'clock, it's six!<sup>68</sup> In how much anguish of spirit I've been – and still am! It's true that fortune and nature hold the account in balance; the one never does you a good turn that on the other side something evil doesn't surge up. The more my hope has grown, the more my fear has grown. Miserable me! Will it ever be possible for me to live with so many worries, disturbed by these fears and these hopes? I'm a ship tossed by two different winds, which fears so much more the nearer she is to port. The simplicity of Messer Nicia makes me hope; the foresight and firmness of Lucrezia make me fear. Woe is me, for I can't find rest anywhere! Sometimes I try to conquer myself, reproaching myself with this furor of mine, and I say to myself: "What are you doing? Are you mad? When you obtain her, what will it be? You'll recognize your error, you'll repent of all the troubles and cares you've had. Don't you know how little good a man finds in the things he has desired, compared to what the man supposed he'd find there? On the other side, the worst that can come to you from it is to die and go to hell; but how many others are dead! And there are so many good men in hell! Are you ashamed to go there? Face your lot; flee evil, but, not being able to flee it, bear it like a man; don't prostrate yourself, don't degrade yourself like a woman." And so I take heart, but I stay happy only for a little while, because from every side, such a desire to be with her just once attacks me that, from the soles of my feet to my head, I feel completely altered: my legs tremble, my insides move about, my heart is torn

<sup>68</sup>five o'clock, it's six: the text reads "twenty-three, it's twenty-four."

from my breast, my arms give up their strength, my tongue becomes mute, my eyes are dazzled, my brain spins. If I could just find Ligurio, I'd have someone to get it off my chest to. But here he is coming towards me, fast. This fellow's report will make me either live a little longer, or die outright.

### Scene Two (*Ligurio, Callimaco*)

**LIGURIO:** (I've never wanted to find Callimaco so much, and I've never had so much trouble finding him. If I were bringing him bad news, I'd have met him at once. I've been to his house, in the Piazza, in the Market, at the Spini Bench, at the Tornaquinci Loggia, and I haven't found him. These lovers have quicksilver under their feet, and they can't stay still.)

**CALLIMACO:** (Why do I wait, why don't I call him? He even seems happy to me.) Oh, Ligurio! Ligurio!

**LIGURIO:** Oh, Callimaco, where have you been?

**CALLIMACO:** What news?

**LIGURIO:** Good.

**CALLIMACO:** Truly good?

**LIGURIO:** The best.

**CALLIMACO:** Has Lucrezia agreed?

**LIGURIO:** Yes.

**CALLIMACO:** The Frate did what was necessary?

**LIGURIO:** He did.

**CALLIMACO:** Oh, blessed Frate! I'll always pray to God for him.

**LIGURIO:** Oh fine! As if God granted grace in evil things as well as good ones! The Frate will want something other than prayers!

**CALLIMACO:** What will he want?

**LIGURIO:** Money!

**CALLIMACO:** Give it to him. How much have you promised him?

**LIGURIO:** Three hundred ducats

**CALLIMACO:** You've done well.

**LIGURIO:** The Dottore has paid out twenty-five.

**CALLIMACO:** What?

**LIGURIO:** It's enough for you that he's paid them.

**CALLIMACO:** Lucrezia's mother, what's she done?

**LIGURIO:** Almost the whole thing. As soon as she learned that her daughter could have this good night without sin, she never rested from praying, commanding, comforting Lucrezia, so much that she led her to the Frate, and there worked it in such a way that she consented.

CALLIMACO: Oh God! For what merits of mine do I have so many good things? I could die of happiness.

LIGURIO: (What kind of person is this? Now for happiness, now for sorrow, this fellow wants to die no matter what.) Do you have the potion in order?

CALLIMACO: Yes, I have.

LIGURIO: What'll you send him?

CALLIMACO: A glass of hypocras, just right to settle the stomach, cheer the brain. Woe is me, oh me, oh me, I'm ruined!

LIGURIO: What is it? What can it be?

CALLIMACO: There's no remedy for it.

LIGURIO: What the devil is it?

CALLIMACO: Nothing can be done. I've walled myself up in an oven.

LIGURIO: Why? Why don't you say it? Take your hands away from your face.

CALLIMACO: Don't you know that I told Messer Nicia that you, he, Siro, and I would catch someone and tuck him in next to his wife?

LIGURIO: What of it?

CALLIMACO: What of it? If I'm with you, I can't be the one that's taken; if I'm not, he'll see the trick.

LIGURIO: What you say is true, but isn't there any remedy?

CALLIMACO: No, I don't believe so.

LIGURIO: Yes, it'll be well.

CALLIMACO: What?

LIGURIO: I want to think a little.

CALLIMACO: You've cleared it up all right; I'm out in the cold if you have to think it over now!

LIGURIO: I've got it.

CALLIMACO: What?

LIGURIO: I'll make the Frate, who's helped us up to now, do the rest of this.

CALLIMACO: In what way?

LIGURIO: We all have to disguise ourselves. I'll make the Frate disguise himself; he'll counterfeit your voice, your face, your dress; and I'll tell the Dottore it's you and he'll believe it.

CALLIMACO: I like it, but what will I do?

LIGURIO: I count on you to put on a short jacket, and with a lute in your hand, come near the corner of his house, singing a little song.

CALLIMACO: With my face uncovered?

LIGURIO: Yes, because if you wore a mask, he'd get suspicious.

CALLIMACO: He'll recognize me.

LIGURIO: No he won't, because I want you to twist your face, to open or screw up your mouth, or grind your teeth, to close one eye. Try a little.

CALLIMACO: Do I do it like this?

LIGURIO: No.

CALLIMACO: Like this?

LIGURIO: Not enough.

CALLIMACO: This way?

LIGURIO: Yes, yes, keep that in mind. I have a fake nose at home; I want you to stick it on.

CALLIMACO: Well, what will you do then?

LIGURIO: When you have appeared at the corner, we'll be there, we'll grab the lute, we'll take you, spin you around, lead you to the house, put you to bed. And the rest you must do by yourself!

CALLIMACO: The thing is to get there!

LIGURIO: You'll get there; but to do what you can to return there is up to you, not to us.

CALLIMACO: What?

LIGURIO: You must gain<sup>69</sup> her for yourself tonight, and, before you leave, make yourself known to her, uncover the trick to her, show her the love you bear for her, tell her of the good you wish her; and how without scandal she can be your friend, and with great scandal, your enemy. It's impossible that she won't agree with you, and that she'll want this night to be the only one.

CALLIMACO: Do you believe that?

LIGURIO: I'm certain of it. But let's not lose any more time; it's already eight<sup>70</sup> o'clock. Call Siro, send the potion to Messer Nicia, and wait for me at home. I'll go for the Frate, make him disguise himself, and lead him here, and we'll meet the Dottore and do what's left.

CALLIMACO: Very well! Go ahead.

### Scene Three (*Callimaco, Siro*)

CALLIMACO: Oh, Siro!

SIRO: Sir!

CALLIMACO: Come here.

SIRO: Here I am.

<sup>69</sup>gain: *guadagni*. See note on Callimaco in the Note on Names of Characters.

<sup>70</sup>eight: the text reads "two."

CALLIMACO: Take that silver cup that's in the cupboard of my room, and bring it to me, covered with a bit of cloth, and watch out that you don't spill it on the way.

SIRO: I'll do it.

CALLIMACO: (This fellow's been with me ten years, and has always served me faithfully. I believe I'll also find him faithful in this case; and even though I haven't told him about this trick, he guesses it himself, because he's a good rogue, and I see that he's accomodating himself.)

SIRO: Here it is.

CALLIMACO: That's good. Quick, go to Messer Nicia's house and tell him that this is the medicine that his wife has to take right after supper – and the earlier supper is, the better – and that we'll be on the corner as arranged, at the time he's going to be there. Go quickly!

SIRO: I'm going.

CALLIMACO: Listen here. If he wants you to wait for him, wait and come here with him; if he doesn't want you to, return here to me when you've given it to him and delivered the message.

SIRO: Yes, sir.

#### Scene Four (*Callimaco alone*)

CALLIMACO: I'm waiting for Ligurio to return with the Frate, and anyone who says that waiting is a hard thing, says the truth. I'm losing ten pounds every hour, thinking about where I am now and where I could be two hours from now, fearing that something will come up which will interfere with my design. Because, if it did, this would be the last night of my life, because I'll either throw myself from those windows or I'll stab myself with a knife in her doorway. I'll do something so that I won't live any longer. But do I see Ligurio? It is he. He has someone with him who seems humpbacked, lame; it's surely the Frate disguised. Oh, *frati!* Know one and you know them all. Who's that other one who's come up to them? It looks like Siro, who'll already have given the message to the Dottore; it's he. I'll wait for them here to join them.

#### Scene Five (*Siro, Ligurio, Frate Timoteo disguised, Callimaco*)

SIRO: Who is with you, Ligurio?

LIGURIO: A good man.

SIRO: Is he lame or is he pretending?

LIGURIO: Look at something else.

SIRO: Oh! He's got the face of a great rascal!

LIGURIO: Oh, be quiet; you're messing everything up! Where is Callimaco?

CALLIMACO: I'm here. You are welcome!

LIGURIO: Oh, Callimaco, warn this mad little Siro; he's already said a thousand mad things.

CALLIMACO: Siro, listen here; tonight you have to do everything Ligurio tells you, and imagine, when he commands you, that it's me; and whatever you see, feel, or hear, you must keep absolutely secret, in so far as you esteem my property, my honor, my life, and your own good.

SIRO: I'll do it.

CALLIMACO: Did you give the glass to the Dottore?

SIRO: Yes, sir.

CALLIMACO: What did he say?

SIRO: That everything will now be as arranged.

TIMOTEO: Is this Callimaco?

CALLIMACO: I am, at your command. The terms between us are set; you can dispose of me and all my fortunes as your own.

TIMOTEO: I've understood it and believe it and have undertaken to do something for you that I would not have done for any man in the world.

CALLIMACO: You won't lose your labor.

TIMOTEO: It's enough that you wish me well.

LIGURIO: Let's leave off the ceremonies. We'll go disguise ourselves, Siro and I. You, Callimaco, come with us in order to be able to go do your business. The Frate will wait here for us; we'll return immediately and go find Messer Nicia.

CALLIMACO: Very well; let's go.

TIMOTEO: I'll wait for you.

### **Scene Six (*The Frate, alone, disguised*)**

TIMOTEO: They speak the truth, those who say that bad company leads men to the gallows; and many times one comes to harm by being too easy-going and too good, as well as by being too wicked. God knows I didn't intend to injure anybody; I stayed in my cell, I said my office<sup>71</sup>,

<sup>71</sup>office: church service.

I dealt with my devout; then this devil of a Ligurio happened upon me, who made me dip my finger in error, where I have put my arm and my whole body, and I don't know yet where I might end up. But I comfort myself that when a thing matters to many, many have to be careful about it. But here are Ligurio and that servant returning.

### Scene Seven (*Frate Timoteo, Ligurio, Siro*)

TIMOTEO: Welcome back!

LIGURIO: Do we look good?

TIMOTEO: Excellent.

LIGURIO: We still need the Dottore. Let's go towards his house; it's after nine<sup>72</sup> o'clock. Let's be on our way!

SIRO: Who's opening his door? Is it the servant?

LIGURIO: No, it's he, himself. Ah, ha, ha, eh!

SIRO: You're laughing?

LIGURIO: Who wouldn't laugh? He's got on a little cloak that doesn't cover his backside. What the devil does he have on his head? It looks like one of those canon's furs, and a little sword underneath; ah! ah! he's grumbling I don't know what. Let's draw aside and hear some calamity about his wife.

### Scene Eight (*Messer Nicia, disguised*)

NICIA: What a fuss this mad wife of mine has made! She's sent the maid to her mother's house, and the servant to the country. For this I praise her; but I certainly don't praise her, that before she was willing to go to bed, she was so squeamish: "I don't want to! What shall I do?... What are you making me do?... Oh me! *mamma mia!*..." And if her mother hadn't talked the father of a leek<sup>73</sup> to her she wouldn't have entered that bed. Plague take her! I really like to see women fussy, but not so much, because she's cut off our heads, the cat brain! Then if someone said: "Let the wisest woman in Florence be hanged," she would say: "What have I done to you?" I know that Pasquina will go

<sup>72</sup>nine: the text reads "three."

<sup>73</sup>talked the father of a leek: "rebuked and argued with her," perhaps with an obscene suggestion. Stage translation: "given her a talking to."

into Arezzo,<sup>74</sup> and before I leave the game I'll be able to say like Monna Ghinga: "From having seen with these hands."<sup>75</sup> I'm still fine! Who would recognize me? I seem bigger, younger, more nimble; and there isn't a woman that would take bed money from me. But where will I find those fellows?

### Scene Nine (*Ligurio, Messer Nicia, Frate disguised, Siro*)

LIGURIO: Good evening, Messer!

NICIA: Oh, oh, oh!

LIGURIO: Don't be afraid, it's only us.

NICIA: Oh! You're all here! If I hadn't recognized you right away, I'd have given you the straightest thrust I knew with this sword! You're Ligurio? and you Siro? and that other the Maestro? Ah!

LIGURIO: Yes, Messer.

NICIA: Move aside. Oh! he is well disguised – *Va'-qua-tu*<sup>76</sup> wouldn't know him!

LIGURIO: I've made him put two nuts in his mouth, so he won't be recognized by his voice.

NICIA: You're really dumb.

LIGURIO: Why?

NICIA: Why didn't you tell me that earlier? I'd have put two in my mouth also, and you know how important it is not to be recognized by the voice.

LIGURIO: Take this and put it in your mouth.

NICIA: What is it?

LIGURIO: A ball of wax.

NICIA: Give it here...ca, pu, ca, co, co, cu, cu, spu...Plague come to you, piece of a scoundrel!

LIGURIO: I beg your pardon, I gave you something else by mistake without realizing it.

NICIA: Ca, ca, pu...what, what, what was it?

LIGURIO: Aloes.

<sup>74</sup> Pasquina...Arezzo: proverb meaning "the thing will be done." A military metaphor with sexual suggestion. Stage translation: "one town will go into another."

<sup>75</sup> Monna Ghinga: "from having seen with these hands": apparently a proverbial speaker who used the expression, meaning that she'd made sure of something. Stage translation: "like Monna Ghinga in the old story: 'I've seen it – with these hands.'"

<sup>76</sup> *Va'-qua-tu*: famous Florentine jailer, a man of great power. The name means "Come here, you." Stage translation: "Va'-qua-tu, the jailer."

NICIA: Damn you! Spu, spu... Maestro, you don't say anything?

TIMOTEO: Ligurio has made me angry.

NICIA: Oh! You disguise your voice well.

LIGURIO: Let's not lose any more time here. I'll be the captain, and get the army in order for the battle. At the right horn Callimaco will be in charge, at the left myself, and between the two horns<sup>77</sup> will be the Dottore here. Siro will be rear-guard in order to give assistance to whichever company might fall back. The code name will be Saint Cuckoo.<sup>78</sup>

NICIA: Who is Saint Cuckoo?

LIGURIO: He's the most honored saint in France. Let's go; we'll set the ambush at this corner. Stand and listen; I hear a lute.

NICIA: That's what it is. What do we do?

LIGURIO: We'll send a scout ahead to discover who he is, and we'll act according to what he reports to us.

NICIA: Who'll go?

LIGURIO: Go along, Siro. You know what you have to do. Consider, examine, return quick, report to us.

SIRO: I'm going.

NICIA: I wouldn't want for us to catch a crab, some weak old man or an invalid, and for this game to have to be played again tomorrow night.

LIGURIO: Don't fear; Siro is a valiant man. Here he is, coming back. What did you find, Siro?

SIRO: He's the finest young fellow you ever saw! He isn't twenty-five years old, and he's coming alone in a little jacket playing a lute.

NICIA: He'll do, if you're telling the truth; but watch out because this broth could be upset all over you!

SIRO: He's just what I've told you.

LIGURIO: Wait till he gets around this corner, and at once we'll be upon him.

NICIA: Come over here, Maestro; you seem to be a man of wood. Here he is.

CALLIMACO: May the devil be able to come to your bed,  
Since I won't be able to come there!<sup>79</sup>

<sup>77</sup>between the two horns: or wings (of an army). Nicia, the cuckold, will be between the horns.

<sup>78</sup>Saint Cuckoo: another reference to the cuckolding.

<sup>79</sup>The first two lines of a popular song. The verse continued: "And may he break two ribs in your chest/and the other parts that God has made you;/and drag you through mountains and valleys,/and take off the tops of your shoulders." See Debenedetti's edition (Strasburg, 1910).

LIGURIO: Stand still. Give that lute here.

CALLIMACO: Woe is me! What have I done?

NICIA: You'll see. Cover his head, gag him!

LIGURIO: Spin him around!

NICIA: Give him another turn! Give him another! Take him into the house!

TIMOTEO: Messer Nicia, I'm going to go rest, because my head aches so it's killing me. And if it's not necessary, I won't return tomorrow morning.

NICIA: Yes, Maestro, don't return; we can make do by ourselves.

### Scene Ten (*Frate Timoteo alone.*)

TIMOTEO: They're shut up in the house, and I'll go to the monastery. And you, spectators, don't blame us, because nobody will sleep here tonight, so the Acts won't be interrupted by time.<sup>80</sup> I'll say the office. Ligurio and Siro will eat supper, because they haven't eaten today; the Dottore will go from the bedroom into the hall, so the kitchen will be clear. Callimaco and Madonna Lucrezia won't sleep, because I know if I were he and you were she, we wouldn't sleep.

### Song<sup>81</sup> (*after the fourth act*)

Oh sweet night, oh holy  
nocturnal and quiet hours,  
who accompany yearning lovers;  
in you are gathered so many  
joys, that you are  
the only cause that makes souls blessed.

You give just prizes  
to amorous troops  
for their long labors;  
you make, oh happy hours,  
every frozen breast burn with love!

<sup>80</sup>interrupted by time: a humorous reference to dramatic theories which decreed that a play should represent no more than twenty-four hours of uninterrupted time.

<sup>81</sup>The rhyme scheme of the Song is abcabcdeff.

## ACT FIVE

### Scene One (*Frate Timoteo alone*)

TIMOTEO: I haven't been able to close an eye tonight, so great is my desire to hear how Callimaco and the others have made out. And to consume the time I've attended to various things: I said matins, read a life of the Holy Fathers, went into the church and lit a lamp that had gone out, changed a veil on a madonna who works miracles. How many times have I told these *frati* that they should keep her clean! And then they marvel if devotion is lacking. I remember when there were five hundred images there and today there aren't twenty; this is our fault, because we haven't known how to maintain her reputation. We used to go to her in procession every night after compline<sup>82</sup> and have lauds sung for her every Saturday. We always made vows to her then so that some fresh images to her would be seen; in confessions we used to encourage men and women to make vows to her. Now none of these things is done, and then we marvel if things go cold! Oh, how few brains<sup>83</sup> are in these *frati* of mine! But I hear a great noise from Messer Nicia's house. Here they are, by my faith; they're bringing out the prisoner. I've arrived in time. They really have delayed to the last drop; it's just dawn. I'm going to stay and hear what they say, without showing myself.

<sup>82</sup>compline: the last service of the day.

<sup>83</sup>few brains: *poco cervello*. See Act Three, Scene Nine.

**Scene Two (*Messer Nicia, Callimaco, Ligurio, Siro*)**

NICIA: You grab him from that side and I'll take this; and you, Siro, you hold him by his jacket from behind.

CALLIMACO: Don't harm me!

LIGURIO: Don't be afraid, just go away.

NICIA: Let's not go any further.

LIGURIO: Very well, let him go here. Give him two turns so that he won't know where he's come from. Spin him around, Siro!

SIRO: There.

NICIA: Spin him another time!

SIRO: It's done.

CALLIMACO: My lute!

LIGURIO: Go rascal, on your way! If I hear of you talking I'll cut your throat!

NICIA: He's fled. Let's go get out of these togs; and we'd better all go out early, so that it doesn't seem as though we've been awake tonight.

LIGURIO: What you say is true.

NICIA: You and Siro go find Maestro Callimaco, and tell him that the thing has gone well.

LIGURIO: What can we tell him? We don't know anything. You know that, having arrived at the house, we went into the cellar to drink. You and your mother-in-law remained with him in hand, and we never saw you again until now, when you called us to send him out.

NICIA: What you say is true. Oh! I have fine things to tell you! My wife was in bed in the dark. Sostrata was waiting for me at the fire. I arrived with this young fellow, and so that nothing would be done under a hood, I led him into a storeroom that I have in the hall, where there was a shaded lamp, and it threw off a bit of light, in such a way that he couldn't see my face.

LIGURIO: Wisely done.

NICIA: I made him strip, and he hesitated; I turned on him like a dog, so that it seemed to him to take a thousand years to get out of his clothes, and he remained naked. His face is ugly. He had a big nose, a twisted mouth; but you never saw finer flesh! White, soft, smooth — and about the other things — don't ask about them.

LIGURIO: It's just as well not to talk about them. Why did you need to see all of him?

NICIA: You must be joking.<sup>84</sup> Since I'd put my hands into the dough, I wanted to get to<sup>85</sup> the bottom of it. Then I wanted to see if he was healthy; if he'd had boils<sup>86</sup> where would I have been? You're just mouthing words.

LIGURIO: You're right.

NICIA: When I had seen that he was healthy, I pulled him after me, and led him into the bedroom in the dark; I put him to bed; and before I left, I wanted to get a feel for<sup>87</sup> how the thing was going, because I'm not used to being made to take fireflies for lanterns.

LIGURIO: With how much prudence you've managed<sup>88</sup> this thing!

NICIA: Having touched and felt everything, I left the bedroom, locked the door, and went to my mother-in-law who was at the fire, and all night we waited, talking.

LIGURIO: What did you talk about?

NICIA: About Lucrezia's stupidity, and how much better it would have been if, without so many goings-on, she had given in at first. Then we talked about the baby – for I always seem to have him in my arms, the little cutie – until I heard the seventh<sup>89</sup> hour strike, and, fearing that day was coming on, I went into the bedroom. And what do you think, I couldn't make that big rascal get up.

LIGURIO: I believe it!

NICIA: He'd liked the ointment! Nevertheless, he got up, I called you, and we brought him out.

LIGURIO: The thing has gone well.

NICIA: What would you think troubles me?

LIGURIO: What?

NICIA: That poor young man, that he has to die so soon, and that this night had to cost him so dear.

LIGURIO: Oh, don't give it much thought! Let him take care of it.

NICIA: What you say is true. But it really seems like a thousand years before I find Maestro Callimaco and rejoice with him.

LIGURIO: He'll be out within an hour. But it's broad daylight. We'll go change; what will you do?

<sup>84</sup>You must be joking: literally, "You want the iambic [*el giombo*]". The iambic meter was associated with invectives and satires.

<sup>85</sup>get to: *toccare*: "touch."

<sup>86</sup>boils: symptom of syphilis.

<sup>87</sup>get a feel for: *toccare con mano*: "touch with my hands" or "make sure," here comically literal as well.

<sup>88</sup>managed: *governato*.

<sup>89</sup>seventh: the text reads "thirteenth."

NICIA: I'll also go into the house and put on my good clothes. I'll make my wife get up and wash, and make her come to the church and be blessed.<sup>90</sup> I'd like you and Callimaco to be there, and we can talk to the Frate to thank him and repay him for the good he's done us.

LIGURIO: Very well; we'll do it.

### Scene Three (*Frato Timoteo, alone*)

TIMOTEO: I've heard this talk and liked it, considering how stupid this Dottore is; but the last part delighted me above all. And since they should be coming to find me at home, I won't stay here longer, but will wait for them at the church, where my merchandise will be worth more. But who's coming out of that house? It looks like Ligurio, and with him must be Callimaco. I don't want them to see me, for the reasons said. Anyway, if they don't come to find me, I'll always have time to go find them.

### Scene Four (*Callimaco, Ligurio*)

CALLIMACO: As I've told you, my Ligurio, I stayed with a troubled mind until three<sup>91</sup> o' clock, and although I took great pleasure in it, it didn't seem good to me. But then I made myself known to her, and made her understand the love I bore for her, and how easily, on account of her husband's simplicity, we could live happily without any scandal, promising her, whenever God did otherwise with him, to take her for my wife. And besides these true reasons, having tasted what a difference there is between my lying with her and Nicia's, and between the kisses of a young lover and those of an old husband, after some sighs, she said: "Since your astuteness, my husband's stupidity, my mother's simplicity, and my confessor's wickedness have led me to do what I never would have done by myself, I'm determined to judge that it comes from a heavenly disposition which has so willed; and I don't have it in me to reject what Heaven wills me to accept. Therefore, I take you for lord, master, and guide; you are my father, my defender, and I want you to be my every good; and what my husband wanted

<sup>90</sup>blessed: as in the ceremony performed the first time a woman goes to church after child-birth. Nicia is celebrating early.

<sup>91</sup>three: the text reads "nine."

for one evening, I want him to have always. You will, therefore, make yourself his close friend<sup>92</sup> and you'll go to the church this morning, and from there you'll come have dinner with us; and your comings and goings will be up to you, and we'll be able to come together at any time and without suspicion." Hearing these words, I was ready to die on account of their sweetness. I wasn't able to respond with the least part of what I would have wanted to say. So I find myself the most happy and contented man that was ever in the world, and if this happiness wouldn't fail, either through death or through time, I would be more blessed than the blessed, more sainted than the saints.

LIGURIO: I take great pleasure in everything to your benefit, and it has come about just as I told you. But what do we do now?

CALLIMACO: Let's go towards the church, because I promised her I'd be there, where you will see her, her mother, and the Dottore.

LIGURIO: I see his door opening; there they are and they're coming out and have the Dottore behind them.

CALLIMACO: Let's go into the church and wait there.

### Scene Five (*Messer Nicia, Lucrezia, Sostrata*)

NICIA: Lucrezia, I believe it is well to do things in fear of God and not like a mad woman.

LUCREZIA: What is there to do now?

NICIA: Look how she responds! She looks like a rooster!

SOSTRATA: Don't marvel at it, she's a bit angry.

LUCREZIA: What are you trying to say?

NICIA: I say that I'd better go ahead and speak to the Frate, and tell him that he's to meet you at the church door, to lead you to the blessing, because, this morning it's just as if you were reborn.

LUCREZIA: Why don't you go?

NICIA: You're very bold this morning! Last night she seemed half dead.

LUCREZIA: Thanks to you!

SOSTRATA: Go find the Frate. But there's no need to, he's outside the church.

NICIA: What you say is true.

<sup>92</sup>close friend: *comparo*: also "godfather."

**Scene Six (*Frate Timoteo, Messer Nicia, Lucrezia, Callimaco, Ligurio, Sostrata*)**

TIMOTEO: I'm coming out because Callimaco and Ligurio have told me that the Dottore and the women are coming to the church.

NICIA: *Bona dies*<sup>93</sup>, Padre!

TIMOTEO: You are welcome, and may such good come to you, Madonna, that God will give you a fine boy!

LUCREZIA: God will it!

TIMOTEO: And, by all means, He will.

NICIA: Do I see Ligurio and Maestro Callimaco in the church?

TIMOTEO: Yes, sir.

NICIA: Beckon to them.

TIMOTEO: Come!

CALLIMACO: God save you!

NICIA: Maestro, take the hand of my wife here.

CALLIMACO: Willingly.

NICIA: Lucrezia, this is the man who will have been the cause of our having a staff to sustain our old age.

LUCREZIA: I hold him very dear, and want him to be our close friend.<sup>94</sup>

NICIA: Now you are blessed! And I want him and Ligurio to come dine with us today.

LUCREZIA: By all means.

NICIA: And I want to give them the key of the ground floor room in the loggia, so that they can return there at their convenience, because they don't have women at home and they live like beasts.

CALLIMACO: I accept it to use when I have occasion.

TIMOTEO: Am I to have the money for the alms?

NICIA: You know you will, Domine. I'll send it to you today.

LIGURIO: Is there no man who remembers Siro?

NICIA: Let him ask, because what I have is his. You, Lucrezia, how many *grossi* do you have to give the Frate for the blessing?

LUCREZIA: Give him ten.

NICIA: Let him drown!

TIMOTEO: Madonna Sostrata, it seems to me you've put a new sprout on the old.

SOSTRATA: Who wouldn't be happy?

<sup>93</sup>*Bona dies*: "Good day" (Latin).

<sup>94</sup>close friend: or "godfather."

TIMOTEO: Let's all go into the church, and there we shall say the regular prayers; then after the office, you will go dine as you please.

You, who are waiting, don't wait for us to come out any more; the office is long, and I shall remain in the church, and they will go home by the side exit. Farewell!